

What is claimed is:

1. A process cartridge detachably attachable to a main body of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, comprising:

an electrophotographic photosensitive member on which an electrostatic latent image is formed,

process means working on the electrophotographic photosensitive member,

a flexible member adapted to protect the electrophotographic photosensitive member and capable of taking a protection position in which the flexible member protects the electrophotographic photosensitive member and a retraction position in which the flexible member retracts from the protection position,

a support member having a support portion on which the flexible member is supported, provided pivotably on a frame of the cartridge and adapted to move the flexible member from the protection position to the retraction position, and

a regulating member provided on the flexible member so as to regulate the positions of creases which occur on the flexible member in accordance with a pivotal movement of the support member, and which extend in parallel with the longitudinal direction of the electrophotographic photosensitive member,

the flexible member being folded on the creases and moved to the retraction position.

2. A process cartridge according to Claim 1, wherein:  
the flexible member is bent to an outer side of the process cartridge when the flexible member is in the protection position, in such a manner that the flexible member does not contact the electrophotographic photosensitive member,

the support portion passing through a region between the regulating member and the electrophotographic photosensitive member in accordance with a pivotal movement of the support member.

3. A process cartridge according to Claim 1, wherein:  
the flexible member has:

a first crease occurring in a region between the regulating member and support portion in accordance with a pivotal movement of the support member, and

a second crease occurring in a region between the regulating member and the support portion at which the cartridge supports the flexible member, in accordance with a further pivotal movement of the support member.

4. A process cartridge according to Claim 1, wherein:  
the cartridge further has a handle used when the cartridge is attached to and detached from the main body of the apparatus,

the regulating member contacting the handle when the flexible member is folded in accordance with a pivotal movement of the support member, to cause the handle to retract to the retraction position.

5. A process cartridge according to Claim 2 or 3, 2  
wherein:

the rigidity of the regulating member is higher than that of the flexible member.

6. A process cartridge according to Claim 2 or 3, 2  
wherein:

the regulating member is a plate type regulating member fixed to the flexible member.

7. A process cartridge according to Claim 1, wherein:

the regulating member is integrally molded with the same material as the flexible member, the thickness of the portion of the flexible member which is provided with the regulating member being larger than that of the portion thereof which is not provided with the regulating member.

8. An electrophotographic image forming apparatus, to and from which a process cartridge can be attached and detached, adapted to be used to form an image on a recording medium, comprising:

(i) an electrophotographic photosensitive member on which an electrostatic latent image is formed,

process means working on the electrophotographic photosensitive member,

a flexible member protecting the electrophotographic photosensitive member, and capable of taking a protection position in which the flexible member protects the electrophotographic photosensitive

member, and a retraction position in which the flexible member retracts from the protection position,

a support member having a support portion on which the flexible member is supported, provided pivotably on a frame of the cartridge, and adapted to move the flexible member from the protection position to the retraction position, and

a regulating member provided on the flexible member so as to regulate the positions of the creases which occur on the flexible member in accordance with a pivotal movement of the support member, and which extend in parallel with the longitudinal direction of the electrophotographic photosensitive member,

the apparatus having a mount for fixing thereto detachably the process cartridge in which the flexible member is folded on the creases and moved to the retraction position,

(ii) moving means adapted to move the support member so that the flexible member is moved to the retraction position in accordance with an action of fixing the process cartridge to the mount, and

(iii) conveying means for conveying the recording medium.